THE MOSQUE

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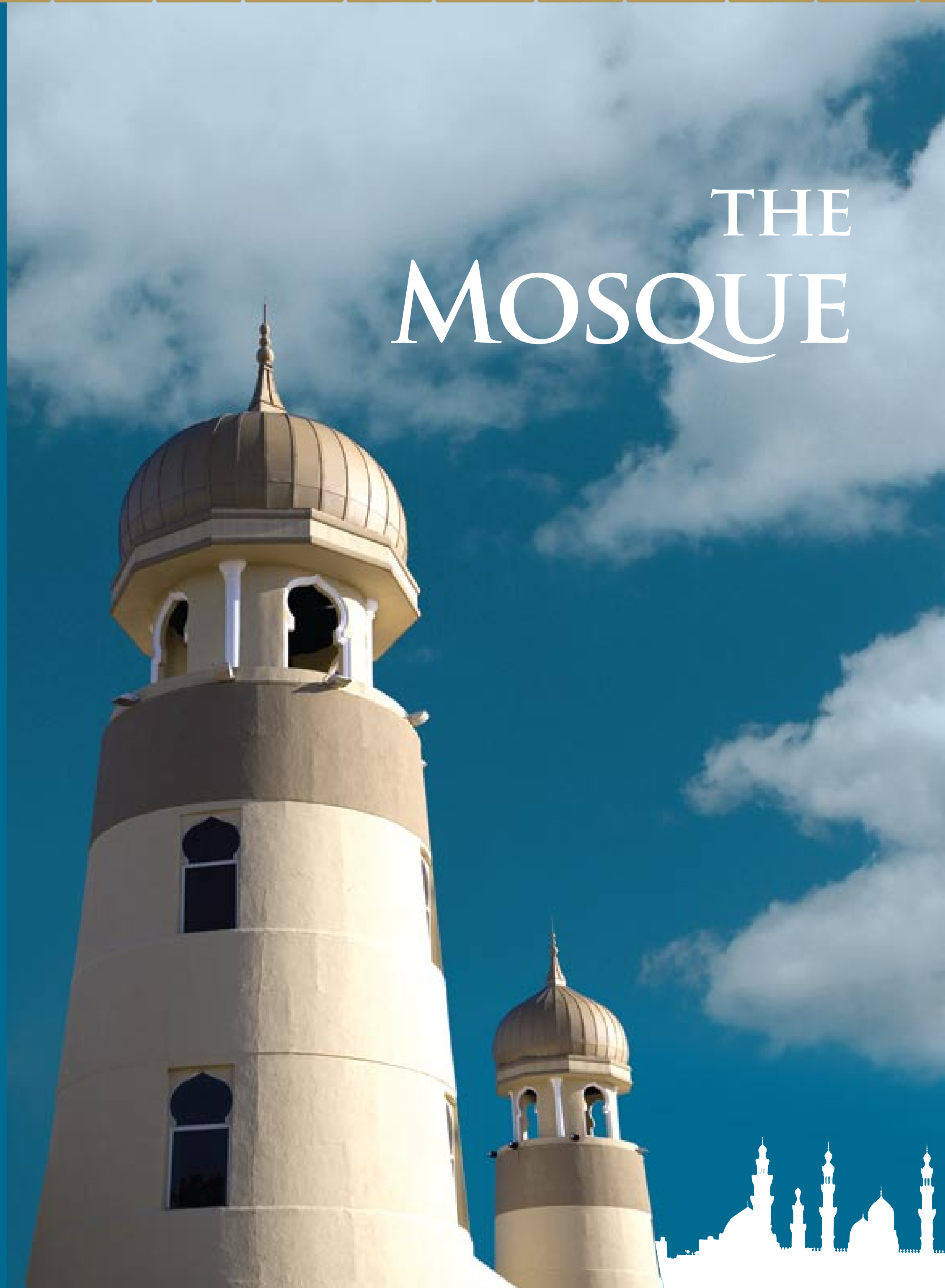
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THE MOSQUE

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The 'Masjid' or The 'Mosque,' is the base and foundation stone for the Muslim population. It is the place where believers congregate, get to know each other and become a solid community. In each local Mosque, all of the people are known by each other and if one person did not attend the Mosque for prayer, the community around him would be enquiring after him.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged the building of mosques and reminded people that it was a rewardable act. It was reported on the authority of Uthman ibn 'Affan that the Messenger of Allah said:

"He who builds a mosque for the sake of Allah, seeking the pleasure of Allah, will be rewarded by Allah with a dwelling in Heaven."

When Prophet Muhammad migrated to Al-Madina, the first action he undertook was to build a mosque, now known as The Prophet's Mosque or 'Al –Masjid-un- Nabwi.' This Mosque quickly became the center of all the Muslim's activities. Deputations coming from other countries were received there and were allowed to use the building as a place to stay. The Prophet's Mosque also served as a center for education and training.

In the time of Prophet Muhammad, less importance was placed on the beautifying of the mosque, with more importance placed on the role within the community. Nowadays, we find that mosques are beautified with calligraphy, Arabesque and geometrical shapes and they tend to be restricted to prayer and recitation of the Qur'an. In Prophet Muhammad's time, it had a number of uses; as a head quarters for the state, a hospital, a shelter for the poor and needy, an information point, a place of relaxation and siesta, as well as being a place of prayer and contemplation.

Muslims are recommended to journey to three Mosques:

The three Holy sites of Islam that a Muslim is recommended to journey to are the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, The Prophet's Mosque in Al- Madina and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The virtues of these mosques are stated in the following sayings of Prophet Muhammad:

"Set out deliberately on a journey only to three mosques: this mosque of mine [in Al- Madinah], the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah], and al-Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem]."

(Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

"A prayer in the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah] is worth 100,000 prayers more than in any other mosque, a prayer in my mosque [in Madinah] is worth 1,000, and a prayer in Jerusalem [al-Aqsa Mosque] is worth 500."

(Reported by Bukhari)

The Sacred Mosque in Makkah



"The first House [of worship] appointed for mankind was that at Bakka [Makkah]; full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings."

(Qur`an 3, 96)

The Holy Mosque in Makkah is built around the Ka`ba, the first house consecrated to the worship of the One True God. The Ka`ba is the simple cube stone building which is completely empty, raised by Prophet Abraham and his son Prophet Ismail on the original foundations laid down by Prophet Adam. At the eastern corner of the Ka`ba there is a black stone known as 'Al-Hajar Al–Aswad' which is the only remnant of the original building built by Prophet Abraham and his son, Ismail.

The Ka`ba is the direction to which Muslims turn in prayer. Neither the Ka`ba nor the Black Stone are objects of worship but serve as focal points that unify Muslims in worship.

"The blood of a believer is more dear to Allah than the Ka`ba and the whole of the surroundings."

(Sahih)

The Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madina

One of the first mosques built in Islam was the one built in Al-Madinah in the year 622CE. It was a very simple structure made from adobe bricks and stone. Adjacent to the mosque was the modest house of Prophet Muhammad, in which he was later buried along with two of his companions; Abu Bakr As-Saddiq and Omar Ibn Al-Khattab. Successive expansions throughout history have made the Prophet's Mosque the magnificent architectural masterpiece it is today.



Adjacent to the mosque is the beautiful green dome, under which lies the grave of Prophet Mohammad. Amongst many of the amazing features of this mosque, you will find the longest engraved Arabic calligraphy masterpiece, the length of which is 2 km, 80 ton sliding domes and courtyards that have umbrellas equal to the roof of the mosque in height, which can be opened and closed according to the weather conditions.

Al-Aqsa Mosque

Al-Aqsa Mosque in the city of Jerusalem, is the third holiest site in Islam. It is dear to the hearts of Muslims as it was the first mosque that they turned to in prayer before the Ka`ba. It's history connects itself to Prophet Abraham, who built it 40 years after building the Ka`ba.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the entire noble sanctuary, which includes not only Omar's Mosque but also the Dome of the Rock and other landmarks inside the stone fence totaling more than 200 places. The area of this is over 144,000 square metres and therefore encompasses over one sixth of Jerusalem's old city. Prayer anywhere within the enclosed sanctuary will be weighed 500 times more than prayer in a regular mosque.



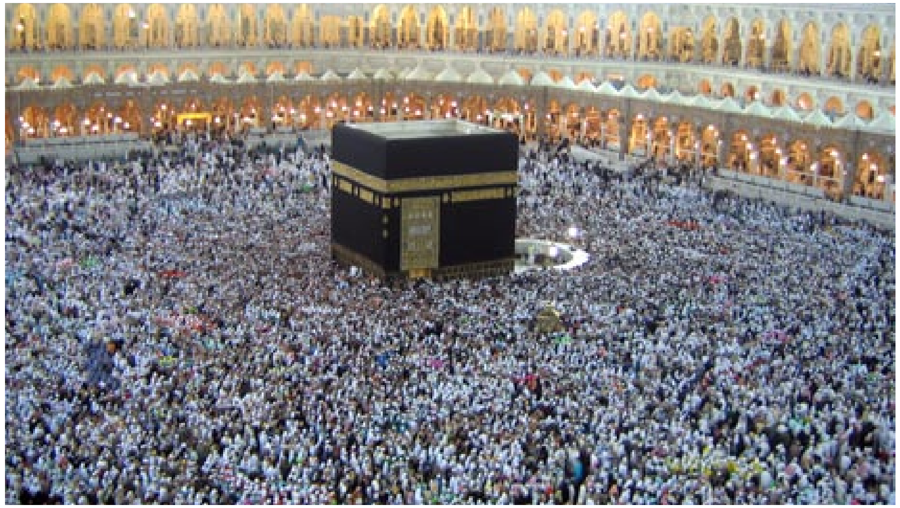
When to pray?

Five daily prayers must be offered during their prescribed time periods. Allah has made religion easy to follow and has made it convenient for Muslims to offer obligatory prayers during a time period that is somewhat flexible. However, it is desirable to offer each prayer in its early stages.

FAJR (Dawn)
The time of the Fajr prayer starts in the very early part of the morning, finishing before the sun rises.
THUHR (Noon)
The time for Thuhr prayer starts with the decline of the sun and continues until the start of the time of ASR prayer.

ASR (Afternoon)
The time of the ASR prayer starts at mid afternoon and ends before sunset.
MAGHRIB (Sunset)
The time of Maghrib prayer starts after sunset and continues till it is dark.
ISHA (Evening) The time of ISHA starts at night-fall, and is the last prayer of the day.

To Pray together



The Mosque plays an extremely important role in a Muslim's life. Islam emphasises that congregational prayers should be prayed in the Mosque. If one is unable to reach a Mosque conveniently, or the journey to the Mosque is unsafe, the prayer may be observed wherever suitable.

The Virtues of the Congregational Prayer

Performing the (obligatory) prayers in congregation is mandatory and required of every believing adult male who has no excuse for not doing so. Many authentic narrations highlight the superiority and excellence of praying in congregation.

"The prayer of a man in congregation is twenty-five times more superior (in reward) to his prayer in his house or market – and this is because he performs ablution and perfects it and goes to the mosque with the sole purpose of performing the prayer. He does not take a step without being raised a degree and having one of his sins erased. When he prays, as long as he does not lose his ablution, the angels keep on praying [for him] 'O Allah, bless him. O Allah, have mercy upon him.' And he is considered in prayer as long as he is waiting for the prayer."

(Al-Bukhaari and Muslim)

What is considered a congregation?

A congregational prayer is when two or more people pray together. The minimum number required for a congregation is two people, the Imaam (leader) and another one with him. The more the people, the more rewarded is the prayer by Allah. Prophet Muhammad said:

"A man's prayer with another man is worth more than his prayer individually, and his prayer with two men is worth more than his prayer with only one man. The more there are, the more rewarding by Allah."

(Ahmad and Abu Dawud)

Women Attending the Congregational Prayer

It is allowed for women to attend the mosque for prayer. Indeed it is only by sheer practicality that more mosques do not have greater prayer areas for women. There has never been an obligation for women to attend the mosque, as it is indeed of higher reward if women pray within the house.

It is for this main reason that you may find many mosques in certain areas without facilities for ladies, such as in Industrial Zones. You may also find that the main mosque in each street has ladies facilities, as this will be the very same mosque that women will attend to listen to the Friday sermon, however they do not wish to attend the mosque for the other 34 occasions per week that the men must.

"Do not prevent the female servants of Allah from the mosques of Allah..."

(Ahmad)

The Leader of the Prayer: Who should be the Imaam?



The name 'Imaam' is given to the person who is chosen to lead the congregation in prayer. In a purpose built mosque, the Imaam would be a male, who has knowledge of the Qur'an and some Islamic Jurisprudence. He should be of good character and trustworthy. His role is to stand in front of the congregation, at the front of the mosque and to lead them in each prayer of the day. When outside of a mosque, the Imaam can be chosen between as follows: The most worthy of leading people in prayer is the one who is the best in memorising and reciting the Quran. If they are equal, then the one who has the deepest knowledge of Sunnah – the way of Prophet Muhammad. If they still are equal in the knowledge of Sunnah, then the oldest of the group. Prophet Muhammad said:

"The most versed in recitation of the Book of Allah leads the people in the prayer. If they are equal, then the one most aware of the Sunnah. If they all are equal, the one who emigrated earlier. If they all are equal, then the oldest of them."

(Muslim)

Notes